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FM AMEMBASSY ASMARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8545  
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0230  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 6018  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0368  
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 2899  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2016  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: GSE SUDAN MEDIATOR OFFERS VIEWS ON POSSIBLE DARFUR  
MEDIATION AND ESPA PROGRESS

REF: A. ASMARA 933 B. ASMARA 940

Classified By: AMB Scott H. DeLisi, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador met with Yemane Ghebreab, PFDJ head of Political Affairs and GSE mediator for Sudan, on November 14 to discuss his recent visit to Khartoum, plans for a potential Eritrean mediation on Darfur and the outcome of the Eastern Front consultative conference in Rubda. Ghebreab provided a candid assessment on the conflicting issues surrounding a Darfur mediation. He reaffirmed the GSE's willingness to play a role in resolving the crisis in Darfur and acknowledged that there is still no clear timeframe, agenda, or structure for the talks. Ghebreab also discussed the internal divisions within the Eastern Front which are hindering the formulation of the party's organizational structure and forward movement on implementation of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA). End Summary.

¶2. (C) Yemane Ghebreab told the Ambassador that in his recent meetings during the week of November 6 in Khartoum with National Congress Party (NCP) officials that the GOS affirmed that they want the GSE to take the lead mediating role between the GOS and DPA non-signatories. However, the GOS had two preconditions. First, they did not want the international community to play a "major" role. When the Ambassador voiced concern that the GSE also seemed disinclined to include the international community Ghebreab tried to reassure him that was not the case. He said that the GSE itself was not opposed to the involvement of the international community and that it understood that all the non-signatories were insistent that the international community participate. But, he said, the GSE also did not want a future mediation to look like "the circus in Abuja."

¶3. (C) The other issue about which NCP officials were concerned was Chad. While the DPA non-signatories all believe that Chad and other regional actors must have a key role in a future mediation, the GOS is adamantly opposed to Chad's involvement. Ghebreab claims that the GSE has been

pushing the GOS to accept Chad in a future mediation, arguing that without its involvement, Chad poses a threat as a spoiler to peace in Darfur. Ghebreab said that President Isaias had made this point to Sudan's President Bashir recently in China during the Sino-Africa Summit and to Idriss Deby when the two met subsequently in Libya.

¶4. (C) Ghebreab stated that the GSE favored a mediation approach that would be inclusive of all non-DPA signatories, to ensure no one is left out to undermine a future agreement. He continued that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) had to be involved to ensure they do not pose a future threat. He also acknowledged that while all the DPA non-signatories had accepted the GSE as a mediator, the GSE was aware that some concerns had been voiced. In particular, he mentioned AbdulWahid's reservation about Asmara serving as a venue for the mediation, preferring the mediation occur outside of Eritrea. Ghebreab noted that a number of outstanding issues still needed to be addressed before any mediation process moves forward.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador inquired about the allegations that several DPA non-signatories had been held in Asmara against their wills. Ghebreab replied that all had been provided travel documents on or about November 1 and all had been free to travel at that time. However, the DPA non-signatories also had made a commitment to the GSE and GOS delegation on October 21 to be back in Asmara for pre-talks with the GOS on November 20. AbdulWahid's and Abdul Shafi's decision to depart Asmara at such a late date as November 12 initially created a problem in meeting this November 20 commitment. However, the GSE has now postponed

the November 20 meeting until all the DPA non-signatories are able to consult in the field and return to Asmara. (Comment: Ghebreab did not provide the new date for the pretalks. Post's information on non-signatory travel plans as of November 16: AbdulWahid has arrived in Europe, Abdul Shafi is on his way to N'djamena and then Darfur and Diraije has departed for Cairo and London. End Comment).

¶6. (C) Turning to the ESPA, Ghebreab stated that he had visited Rubda November 9-11 (a border town between Sudan and Eritrea), where the Eastern Front consultative conference was taking place, and was frustrated with the outcome. In essence, the consultative conference never took place. While all of the Eastern Front parties were present, no discussions on the structure of the organization, nor decisions on positions were made. Instead, the conference devolved into an internal debate within a sub-clan of the Beja, the Hadendewa tribe. (Comment: Emboff had been told by another Sudanese contact that divisions had emerged between Musa Muhammed Ahmed (Chairman of the Eastern Front), Abdulla Kuna and Ali Safi and Suliman Bitay and Fekki Ali (formerly of the Beja Relief Organization), the later of which did not take part in the negotiations with the GOS. End Comment). Ghebreab said that the GSE and other Eastern Sudan groups had departed Rubda without any decisions being made. He hoped that once the internal Hadendawa issues were resolved, they would reconvene the conference.

¶7. (C) Comment: While the Eritreans continue to express interest in the role of Darfur mediator, they seem well aware of the many conflicting issues which will need to be resolved before a process is initiated. The GSE continues to meet with the NCP, SPLM and DPA non-signatories to iron out their differences. Ghebreab and his delegation departed for Khartoum again on November 15 and are rumored to be traveling onward to Juba and possibly Darfur. Post expects the GSE to have a clearer notion on the possibility of mediation upon their return.

¶8. (C) Comment Cont'd: Post was not surprised to hear about the internal divisions besetting the Eastern Front in Rubda. Bitay has frequently played the part of spoiler in

the past and has even fought on behalf of the GOS forces, including involvement in attacks around Hamesh Koreib earlier this year. Post plans to meet with members of the Eastern Front who have returned to Asmara to learn more about the seriousness of these divisions and their implications for the implementation of the ESPA. End Comment.  
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